



# THIEVES FALL OUT

by Cleve Cartmill

ARTY KRAMER was having his mid-morning shot at Gimpy Hancock's when Canelli came in. Arty had the front door bracketed in the mirror when Canelli sidled through it, and it crossed Arty's mind again that Canelli should've been a little guy.

A little man can snivel and whine

and remind you of a rat, and you don't mind too much. But when a big man does it, it kind of makes you sick at your stomach.

Arty watched Canelli's reflection moving along the mirror. There was no doubt where Canelli was going to sit: on the stool next to Arty.

"Hiya, Arty, old boy," Canelli



Based on a radio script originally written for the CBS radio program *Suspense*

By ROBERT L. RICHARDS

said in his high voice. He put a hand between Arty's shoulders, on the new beige Shetland jacket, and gave him a little push.

Arty grunted, kept his eyes on the mirror.

Canelli slid on to the stool and made a comprehensive gesture with a manicured finger. Gimpy came over with a clean shot glass for Canelli, filled it, and poured another for Arty.

"How you doing, Arty, old boy?" Canelli asked again.

"You should know," Arty said.

Canelli laughed. It was a sort of high-pitched giggle. "That's good, Arty! You know, that's all right. Gotta remember that one! 'You should know!'"

"Can it," Arty grated. "You're looking for me?"

Canelli's milk-blue eyes widened. "Looking for you, Arty? Why, not especially. I was just passing, and thought maybe some of the boys would be here, and maybe somebody would like to lay something on the third at Pimlico. So I just dropped in to—"

"Then why don't you blow?" Arty growled. "You can see there's nobody else here."

Canelli looked at his drink for a minute before pouring it into his heavy-lipped mouth. He made the gesture again, and Gimpy poured. Canelli looked into this new drink for a long time before he cleared his throat and raised his eyes to Arty's in the mirror. Arty's gaze was hard and dark and steady, and

Canelli dropped his.

"Well, uh—" he began hesitantly. "As a matter of fact, Arty, old boy, there *is* something—"

"Save it," Arty snapped. "I know what you want, and I haven't got it. I'll give it to you when I get it, and that's that."

"Now look, Arty," Canelli said in placating tones, "I don't want there should be any trouble."

"There won't be any trouble, pal."

"Well, but look, Arty. I took those bets. And my boss is after me. If I don't have it by Monday, I'll be in trouble, plenty."

"All right, put a grand on Tootsie in the third. She'll come in at ten to one, and then I'll pay off."

"Aw, Arty," Canelli objected. "I can't go for that kind of a bet, considering. You think grands grow on—"

"All *right!*" Artie yelled suddenly. "Skip it, then." He got off his stool and started for the door. "Come up to the office this afternoon. Maybe I'll have something for you."

"Gee, thanks, Arty," Canelli said.

Arty went outside and caught a cab. Three minutes later, he walked into the office where Rita fastened blue eyes on him like she was a kitten and he was a piece of fish.

"Hi, babe," he said without expression.

"Hello, Arthur," she said, with lots of it.

"Little Sam in?"

"No, Arthur, but he called. He said to come down to the warehouse at two."

"Okay." He looked at his fancy green-gold Bulova. "Lunch?"

"Oh, Arthur!" she breathed. "Wait till I lock up the switchboard. Thank you, Arthur."

They went to lunch, and she hung on his few words through soup, salad, entree, and dessert. Many glances went their way. They were the best-looking couple in the place.

Over coffee, she said: "What's the matter, Arthur?"

He twitched an eyebrow. "Matter?"

"You're so — different lately. You're—well indifferent."

"What do you want me to do—handsprings?"

"Don't be mad, Arthur," she pleaded. "You used to be full of laughs, and—well, we used to be friends. Lately I might as well be a piece of furniture."

Arty looked down at his pie. "You're a good kid, Rita. It's just no go."

"And why not?" she demanded. "Am I any different than I was a month ago? You thought I was pretty good then. What's the matter with me now?"

"Let's don't talk about it, baby. I got to take you back to the office and then blow."

"Let's *do* talk about it, Arthur. I got things on my mind."

"Such as?"

"Well . . ." She colored with embarrassment. "I've been thinking, Arthur. Where are you getting in this business? You used to have something on the ball."

"And I haven't now?" Arty grinned with tolerant amusement.

"No," she said stubbornly. "Not the way I mean. Maybe you're a good truck driver, I don't know. But you've lost whatever it was made me . . . well, fall in love with you."

Arty looked steadily at her for a few moments. "That's the way it is?"

"That's the way it is, Arthur," she said candidly.

"I . . . well, look, baby, I'm sorry," Arty said. "It's no go," he repeated.

"You said that," she replied. "And, really, I don't care. It's my business who I'm in love with. You can't stop me from feeling the way I do, whatever you do or think. But it gives me a right to wonder what's gonna become of you."

"I can take care of myself," Arty said lightly.

"I wonder," Rita said. "I wonder. You lost that truck load of meat last week. And it was by the grace of God, the way I hear it, you got out with your life."

Arty clenched his beautiful teeth. "We won't talk about it, see?"

"Was a time," Rita went on, "when you knew what you were doing. Now all you do is what Sam says, that and play the horses."

"We . . . won't . . . talk . . . about it," Arty gritted.

Rita shrugged trim shoulders.

"All right, Arthur," she said lightly. "Whatever you like."

Canelli was waiting at the office.

"Hi, Arty, old boy," he said.

"Hello, Rita. I thought I might catch you here, Arty."

"I'll bet," Arty grunted, and brushed past Canelli into the private office. "Come on in."

Canelli followed him, and Rita looked at the closed door with worried blue eyes.

"All right," Arty said, inside the office, "Here it is. Little Sam wants me at the warehouse at two. This is pay-off day. But it won't mean anything to me. You remember what happened. So I got no dough."

Canelli looked at Arty for a moment, then frowned down at the thick, rich rug. "Well, Arty, that certainly puts me in a spot. When will you have it?"

"In another month at the earliest. There it is, take it or leave it."

"Aw, don't get tough, Arty. I know you're good for it sometime. It's just that I'm on the spot, that's all." His frown smoothed out into a sudden smile. "Say, why can't you get it from Sam?"

Arty sat on the edge of the big desk and swung a knife-creased leg. "I'm into Sam as far as I can get. He won't let me have anything."

"Yeah, but you could try, Arty," Canelli pleaded. "Sam must have a hell of a pile salted away in some deposit box. He could spare it."

"Sure he could, but he won't. And it isn't a deposit box, it's in his safe at his place up in Connecticut."

"Yeah?" Canelli said. "I didn't know he had a place up there."

"Near Riverside. It's a hide-out,

way away from everything. MacPhail has one, too, about half a mile from Little Sam's."

"I'll be damned," Canelli said softly. "When does he go out there?"

"Hardly ever," Arty said, and his voice was suddenly rough. "Whadda you care, anyway? Thinking of the days when you used to go in through second story windows?"

"You shouldn't say that, Arty. Why, I don't even know where the place is."

"All right, I'm kidding. Look, I'm sorry about the dough, but that's the way it is. You can do whatever you like about it."

"It ain't what I like, Arty," Canelli said soberly. "My boss might do something, and you wouldn't like what *he* can figure out."

"The hell with your boss!" Arty snapped. "I'm ready for him. Now I got to scam down to the warehouse and watch my share of last month's take go down the drain."

**L**ITTLE SAM was a curious product of modern chaos. The turn of the century brought him into existence in a Brooklyn tenement, and he fought his way to and through adolescence. He learned a great deal about the art of survival during those years, and he flirted for a time with formal education at P.S. 83.

When he was eighteen, he found out about running liquor ashore through Federal patrols, and made a small fortune. Repeal put an end to

that, and Sam took a three-year vacation in Europe. He watched the war clouds rolling up, and he arrived at a conclusion: food is a necessity.

He was all set for rationing. He made his contacts well in advance, and had a fleet of trucks operating before most eventual black marketeers realized what was afoot. Little Sam soon had more undeclared money than he knew what to do with.

That pleased him. He could smile, now, several years later, when he thought of his modern, burglar-proof, fire-proof safe in the country, packed with bills of large denomination. He could feel warm and comfortable when he thought of three plump packets of ten-thousand-dollar bills, wrapped with rubber bands.

Little Sam sat at his desk on this pay-off day, and the corners of his wide, thin mouth curled slightly upward toward the glittering black eyes, fixed on the three men who faced him.

MacPhail, who seemed as large as a medium-sized elephant, was as usual a trifle tight. Not drunk, a long way from it, but he'd had more than he needed, and his great square face was full of alcoholic peace and good nature. Sam considered Moe.

Moe was relaxed. A good steady man, Moe. He was the kind of a guy you never notice in a crowd, and that was sometimes a good thing. But he was always dependable. If he said he'd get a load of prime ribs to Oshkosh, or perfume to Chicago, you could bet they'd get there.

And then, there was Arty.

Arty was, of course, as usual: dapper, dressed to the eyes, and nervous.

"Well," Little Sam said, in that voice that reminded you of a wood rasp on a knot, "it was a good month, except for you, Art."

"Yeah, I know, I know," Arty growled.

"Come on, Sam," MacPhail broke in, "pass around the sugar. I got a date with a beautiful quart."

"All right." Little Sam put a thin bundle of currency on the desk and referred to a list of figures. "Here's the way it worked out. You got seventeen grand coming, Mac. I got the figures all here, if you want to see 'em."

MacPhail leered. "I don't think you'd double-cross me, Sammy."

Little Sam looked up from the list, and fixed MacPhail with a steady, glittering stare. "I wouldn't double-cross anybody, and don't anybody here forget it. Here you are, Mac."

He counted out the money, shoved it across the desk, and MacPhail stuffed it carelessly into his pants pocket.

"Moe, your cut is six grand," Little Sam went on. "You understand you didn't bring in as much business as Mac."

"I'm not squawkin'," Moe said quietly. He took the money, and put it carefully in his billfold, which he returned to an inside coat pocket.

"And my cut," Sam said, tapping the bundle with a grubby finger, "is twenty-one. Part of that is for paying expenses, the rest is my percentage."

"Well, my God," Arty said, "don't I get anything?"

"Arty," Sam said levelly, "your share would've been nine G's, but you lost that truck and trailer. Those things cost dough, not to mention a whole load of prime meat."

"Do you have to take it all out now?" Arty objected.

"I already have," Sam said crisply. He tossed a bill across the desk. "I'll give you five hundred to keep going."

Arty picked up the bill. "Five hundred!" he growled. "Listen, Sam, I need dough."

"You always need dough, and never have any," MacPhail broke in with lazy contempt.

Arty flushed. He took a step towards MacPhail. "Listen, you big tramp—"

"Hes right, Art," Sam interrupted. "You've got to get yourself straightened out, Arty. If I give you any more it'll just go to bookies and gambling joints like all the rest . . ."

"But listen, Sam!" Arty cried. "I tell you I got to have it. There's guys after me." His voice cracked.

"I think he's yellow, Sam," MacPhail drawled.

"You'd better keep out of this, Mac," Arty said between his teeth.

"Ho!" Mac said. "Little pretty boy's gettin' mean. Hell, you ain't even got guts enough to keep a couple of muggs from hijackin' your stuff."

"Shut up!" Sam barked. "There's going to be no fighting in this outfit. Listen, Art . . ."

"Yeah?" Art said sullenly.

"Why don't you go up to my place in Connecticut for a few days? Get a bottle and some babe to talk to, and just loaf. Let me talk to these guys who are looking for you. I know who they are."

"They're tired of talk," Arty growled. "They want action. Besides, the country drives me nuts, all those loud-mouth birds."

"It'll do you good, Arty," Sam went on. "Go ahead, pick up my car at the station."

"No, thanks." Arty turned away.

MacPhail got to his feet. "Well, I'm going up to the country and take a case of whiskey, and tend to my garden. See you Tuesday, boys."

Arty fell into step with MacPhail as they went out. "Say, Mac," he said hesitantly.

"Yeh?"

Mac raised a hand at an oncoming cab that pulled into the curb. He didn't look at Arty. He got inside, followed by Arty.

"Look, Mac," Arty began.

"Grand Central station," Mac told the driver. "Yeh, what, Arty?"

"I'm sorry if I made any cracks. But, hell, you know. I'm worried, and nervous, and that damned hold-up and everything."

"Yeah, kid, I know. Happened to me once. I shot off my face, too. But like Sam says, hell, we can't fight in the organization. We got to get along."

"Well, I just wanted you to know, Mac."

"Hell, Arty, it's okay. But Sam was right on something else. You

oughta take a rest. You're goin' sour. Now why don't you come up with me. You can stay at my place or Sam's. We're close together. Do you good."

Arty stared out the cab window, and his eyes narrowed. He wore the expression of a Big Time Operator who has just hit on a new angle.

He turned back to Mac, and he was smiling.

"You know, I think I'll take you up on that, Mac. That is, if you'll let me buy that case . . .?"

"Aw, I was gonna buy it, anyway."

"I'll do it," Arty said expansively.

"I ought to kick in something for my keep."

Mac shrugged. "Okay. You don't have to, but you don't have to twist my arm, either." He leaned forward. "Stop at the next liquor store," he told the driver.

**M**AC HAD a few more than he needed, and he was in a nasty mood. As the train cleared the city limits, he took a pint flask from his pocket and proffered it.

"Drink?"

"No, thanks," Arty said.

A woman across the aisle, with a face like a spoiled lime, glared at the open display of bottled wealth. Mac saw her, stuck his tongue out at her, and made a second try.

"Gah-wan, have one."

"I don't want one, Mac."

"Drinkin' outa a bottle ain't fancy enough for you, I guess."

"Cut it out, Mac," Arty said. Stop

needling me."

"Well, I'm gonna have one. Here's to inflation." He poured whiskey into his mouth, and the bottle made noises like a bottle having whiskey poured out of it. Mac shuddered, sighed, wiped his mouth, and put the bottle away. He winked at the lime-faced woman across the aisle, and turned to Arty.

"Yep, son, you know what I'm doin'? Money's cheap now, see. Easy to get. So I'm gettin' a hell of a pile, and I'm puttin' it away. So when it gets hard to make again, I'll have my wad and it'll buy twice as much as it will now. So I'll just sit around and do nothin', be a gentleman—like you, Arty."

"Lay off, Mac," Arty growled.

Mac grinned, looking like a playful grizzly. "Okay, no hard feelings?"

"No hard feelings."

"Fine, Arty. I'm gonna take a nap. Call me when we reach Riverside, will ya?"

"Sure."

Mac put his head back against the cushion, and instantly was asleep. Arty stared at the passing countryside and had to admit it was pretty. This was the time of year when the leaves began to turn and the patches of woods were colorful as dime-store windows. Yellow, red, russet, brown—a hundred browns; deep lush green along the little streams where the train made hollow thunder when it crossed; and here and there a lone birch like an unlit candle.

Now and then a cow would

raise her head and stare foolishly at the monster of steel as it throbbed past, sounding its huge fish-horn at intervals. They ought to sell mackerel, Arty thought.

Then the conductor made noises about Riverside, coming up, and Arty shook MacPhail.

"Hey, Mac. This is it. Come out of it."

MacPhail came out of it fuzzily.

"Oh, hello, Arty," he said genially. "Where'd you come from?"

"I've been here all along," Arty said patiently. "Remember?"

Mac blinked, looked out the window as the train huffed to a stop, then grinned.

"Guess I passed out, huh?"

"Well," Arty said carefully, "you dropped off to sleep for a few minutes."

"Oh, I ain't sensitive," Mac said. "I passed out, all right. Well, let's get the hell off and grab a cab." Mac picked up the case of Old Taylor and tucked it under his arm like it was a football.

"What am I talkin' about?" he demanded when they were on the platform. "I got my car here. We don't need any cab."

Arty smiled. He carefully concealed his expression from Mac. It was the smile of a man for whom everything is working out all right.

Mac drove out of town through low rolling hills, and when they passed a large stone house of French Colonial design, he waved a large hand at it.

"Sam's place," he said. He thinks

it's nice. Must've seen a picture in a magazine. Personally I think it looks like hell. Wait'll you see my joint. 'Modulated Frank Lloyd Wright,' I think the architect said. Howd'ya like that? Anyway, it looks like it belongs. There it is."

Arty agreed. Mac's place looked as if it had been formed a long time ago by some orderly process of evolution. It was built on three levels, following the terraced profile of the hill. Late-blooming flowers splotted the face of the hill in yellow drifts. The great front window looked out on the valley from beneath a veil of ivy.

"Say, that's pretty, Mac," Arty said warmly.

Mac chuckled as he wheeled into a winding, gently-rising drive guarded by massive elms. They went inside, and Mac set the case of liquor against the wall of a large, low room paneled in bird's-eye maple.

"Make yourself at home, Arty," Mac said. "I wanna put this dough in the safe."

Mac lumbered through a door, and Arty followed silently. He stood in the open doorway and drew a .38 revolver from a shoulder holster. He made no sound as Mac crossed the room, skirted a desk with a telephone on it, and went to work at the dial of a wall safe.

When Mac had the door of the safe swung open, Arty said: "All right, Mac, up with your hands," and pointed the gun at Mac's chest.

Mac turned slowly. His large

square face wore an expression of puzzlement, rather than surprise or fear. His mouth dropped slightly open, and he cocked his head to one side, like a curious bird. He raised his hands, one of them clutching the sheaf of thousand-dollar bills, to shoulder height.

"What goes, Arty?" he asked, as if he really wanted to know.

"I want you to do me a favor, Mac."

Mac had analyzed the situation by now; his face began to take on grimness, muscle by muscle.

"A stick-up, huh?" he muttered. The mutter grew to a hoarse growl:

"Why, you yellow little rat. If you think you can pull this on me and live—"

"Not a stick-up, Mac," Arty said, calmly. "I just want you to do me a little favor, that's all. And I want to be sure you do it."

"Yeh?" Mac sneered.

"That's right, Mac. Get on the phone and call Rita."

"Why?"

"Because I say so. Look, Mac, I mean it. This ain't a toy gun."

Mac moved slowly to the desk. "This'd better be a gag, Arty. I don't set still for this kind of crap."

"Ask Rita what Sam has lined up for Tuesday. Tell her you just talked to me over at Sam's house, and I didn't know. Go on!" Arty gestured with the gun. "Get at it!"

Mac picked up the phone and dialed Operator. "Atwater three-five-six-two," he said, his eyes steady on Arty. "This is Riverside four-eight-J

... Rita? MacPhail. Look, do you know what Sam's got lined up for Tuesday? ... Well, I just talked to Arty over at Sam's, and he didn't know. Yeh, that's right, Arty. Okay."

He replaced the instrument, continuing to hold his eyes steady on Arty. "All right, now what's the gag?"

Arty smiled thinly. "You never were very smart, Mac. That's my alibi, you big son of a bitch. You will make cracks about me, will you? I'm taking care of that little deal right now. Now that you fixed me up with an alibi."

Mac laughed suddenly.

"Why, you milk-kneed little bastard," he said contemptuously, "you haven't got the guts to shoot. I'm coming over and take that gun away from you and beat you to death with it."

He started around the desk at a slow, deliberate gait. He was half grinning, but his eyes glittered. Arty let him get within five feet of him before he pulled the trigger three times in rapid succession.

CANELLI WAS desperate. He could see no chance of getting any money over the weekend, and he had to turn in some really important dough on Monday. Or else. When he left Arty he went up to his room and did a spell of wall-staring. His milky eyes were wide and fixed and full of despair.

Then, from the unplumbed depths

of his subconscious, an idea began to creep up to the top of his mind. Sam Gross. Little Sam. He had a potful of money and it was out there in the country, unguarded except for locked doors and dial-tumblers.

Canelli thought he had something, and his eyes began to gleam. The more he thought about it, the better it looked. He got up and walked around the room. He beat one fist softly into the palm of his other hand. If he could just make sure that Little Sam would stay in town, he'd run out there and lift the roll.

True, he didn't know the exact address, but that wouldn't be hard to get. But how could he make certain he wouldn't be interrupted? He suddenly thought of a way, and it was so simple that he let loose a high-pitched cackle and went to the telephone.

He dialed a number.

"Hello," he said. "Get this straight, because I'll only call you once. There's a warehouse on Jackson Street, and it's got the name Gross on it. You'll find trucks in there, and a lot of black market stuff. Goodbye."

He hung up and grinned as he dry-washed his immaculate hands. Three blackened lower front teeth were exposed by the grin. He went to the closet and took out a suitcase. He opened this and examined the array of tools and bottles. He nodded with satisfaction.

When Canelli got to Riverside, he took a cab to within a quarter-mile of Sam's big place with its towers

and gewgaws. The taxi went away, and Canelli walked down the road and up the curving drive. He tried the front door. He rang the bell and pounded on the knocker. When he got no answer went around to the back and jemmied a window.

Once inside, he went back to the front door and unlocked it. It wasn't a very strong alibi, but if Sam should show up he could possibly get away with an explanation about the open door.

Then he looked around.

After a search of the dark, high-ceiled rooms on the first floor he went upstairs. There he found what he was looking for, a small room outfitted with office furniture, a telephone, a wall safe, and a bar-room painting of Custer's Last Stand.

Canelli examined the safe.

He took a power drill from the suitcase, plugged it in, and had drilled about halfway through the steel door when he heard a car door slam outside, followed quickly by the slam of the front door.

Feet came swiftly up the stairway.

Canelli didn't lose his head. He jerked out the drill. He picked up the suitcase with his other hand and ran swiftly to the big closet. He pulled the door almost closed behind him.

Then the shakes set in. He trembled, his teeth chattered. He clamped his jaw shut to stop the noise, and waited.

Through the crack he had left he saw Sam Gross come into the room and go straight to the telephone.

Sam had his back to Canelli, and the bookie knew that one course only was open to him. Little Sam was not a man to argue. Canelli inched the door wider as Sam gave the operator a New York number.

"Hello, Rita?" he barked. "Sam. I want you should get in touch with the boys and tell 'em to fade out of sight for a few days. There will be a raid on the warehouse tonight. I think I covered everything before I came out to my country place, but I don't want any of 'em to go around there. Find out where they're going to be as soon as you contact everybody, call me back. I'll get hold of Mac. He's practically next door . . . Arty? I'm calling from my place, and I don't see him . . . Maybe he's over at Mac's. All right, I'll wait for your call."

Canelli had moved to within striking distance while Sam talked. He waited until Sam hung up. Then he struck, with the drill. Sam's skull gave under the first blow. Canelli struck again, and Sam slid out of the chair. Canelli eyed him sharply, felt for a heartbeat, and laid the drill aside. He was just beginning to go through Sam's pockets when he heard a hail from outside.

Simultaneously, the telephone began to ring.

Canelli grabbed the telephone wire with both hands and yanked it out from the wall box. He ran quickly to the window and looked down.

Arty Kramer was walking toward the front door. Canelli turned away from the window, ran to the study

door, snapped the spring lock, went out, and closed it after him.

He was downstairs by the time Arty pushed the doorbell.

Canelli opened the door.

"Hello, Arty," he said.

Arty didn't change expression, but he was quiet for a long moment.

"Thought you didn't know where the place was."

"I came up with Sam," Canelli said. "We got here about five minutes ago. Come on in."

"Where is Sam?"

Canelli made a vague gesture. "Out around the grounds somewhere. He'll be in in a minute."

They went into the big living room, and Arty stood thoughtfully before a print of The Lone Wolf, over the fireplace, for a few minutes.

"Funny I didn't see him," Arty said finally. "I been wandering around the place for an hour. It's a big place, though. Wonder what the chances are for a drink?"

"Probably something here somewhere," Canelli said, and began a search. Presently he found a small portable bar, and they had a drink.

Arty sat on the arm of a big couch and sipped. "Good liquor Sam has."

"Yeh," Canelli didn't touch his drink. His light eyes moved nervously. "Say, Arty," he began tentatively.

"Yeh?"

"Well, I came up with Sam because I thought maybe I could make a touch. But he couldn't see it, and I might as well blow. But I know he paid off today, and—well, did you



get any?"

Arty frowned at the big man. "Me?"

Canelli's eyes shifted. "I don't like to keep asking, but if you did, I sure need it bad."

Arty's frown cleared away suddenly. "Now, I've been meaning to bring that up, Canelli. How much do I owe you?"

"Four thousand, three hundred and twenty," Canelli said promptly.

"That much?" Arty asked in surprised tones. "Well, I can't let you have it all, but suppose I give you a couple grand on account?"

Canelli frowned. "It would help, all right. It ain't what I need, but—"

Arty set his drink down, turning away from Canelli as he did so. His body shielded his hands as he pulled out the money he'd taken from MacPhail's dead hand. He peeled off two thousand dollar bills. He pushed the remainder into his pocket and gave the bills to Canelli.

"I got another idea how you can get the rest of it," Arty said. "You know MacPhail?"

"Well, not too well."

"I know him very well," Arty said. "Say, what the hell are you twitching about?"

Canelli forced his hands to be still. "I don't know. Just nervous, I guess. I need dough bad. What about Mac?"

Arty jerked a thumb toward the road. "He lives around that next curve, and he's there. You can make a touch. He got plenty today."

"Why should he do anything for

me?" Canelli asked skeptically. "I never did anything for him."

"That's what I'm about to tell you!" Arty barked. "If you'll just keep still and listen."

"Now look who's nervous," Canelli said. "I didn't mean anything, Arty, old boy."

"All right. Fix me another drink."

While Canelli made the drink, Arty frowned at the rug. After a few seconds of concentration, he smiled briefly, and took his drink from Canelli with a nod of thanks. He sipped it, then gestured with it as if it were a pointing finger.

"Mac brought me up here, and he was well on his way to getting drunk. He went on up to his place with a case of whiskey, and he ought to be mellow but good by now. And he's the softest touch in the world."

"Then why didn't you put the bite on him?"

"He don't like me," Arty said. "Anybody'll tell you that. Anybody else, though, can take his shirt while he's drinking. So you bounce up there and hit him for whatever you need. I'll guarantee you'll get it."

Canelli thought it over. He paced around the room, and once he darted a glance toward the stairway as if he expected to see someone coming down. He turned to Arty.

"But what'll I tell him?"

"Hell," Arty said expansively, "give him a sob story. You can make up a good one. I know. You've given 'em to me often enough. It don't have to be a hell of a good story. Almost anything'll do."

"I think I'll try it, Arty. Thanks for the tip."

"Don't tell him you're a friend of mine."

"I won't," Canelli said, and went out of the house.

Arty watched through the window until Canelli was out of sight. Then he ran outside to Sam's car, which was headed down the drive. If Sam came back while he was gone, he'd give him a story about getting cigarettes or something. Best not to use Sam's phone. Might be traced.

He let off the brakes, and allowed the big car to coast out into the roadway. He turned on the switch, engaged the clutch, and roared into Riverside. He used the public phone at the railroad station.

"Police?" he said. "I was just passing MacPhail's place, on Jennings Road. You know the place? . . . Yeah, well, I heard a couple shots and somebody yell . . . Never mind who I am. I don't want to get mixed up in it."

He hung up, went out to Sam's car, slammed it into gear and roared back. He was barely in the driveway again when a police car screamed past at high speed. Arty was smiling as he went back into the house to wait for Sam. That open safe, and the money he'd given Canelli, should cinch the situation . . .

THE RIVERSIDE traffic operator listened patiently to the agitated voice on the telephone.

"Mr. Gross's phone is out of

order," Rita told her. "I'm his secretary, and I have a very important message for him. It's really vital. Could you send somebody out there right away to fix it, and tell him to call his office immediately?"

"Yes," the traffic operator said. "We'll take care of it."

It fell to the lot of the phone company's Pete Calkins to make the emergency trip. Pete pulled into Sam's driveway, got out of his green truck, picked up his bag of tools and rang the doorbell.

A good-looking young guy in fancy clothes answered the door.

"Mr. Gross?"

"Mr. Gross is outside on the grounds somewhere."

"Well, I'm the telephone man. The phone here seems to be out of order. Mind if I come in and fix it."

Arty waved a hand. "Go ahead. I don't know where it is."

Pete consulted a slip of paper. "It says here the first room at the top of the stairs. And, oh, yes. Mr. Gross is to call his office right away."

"I'll tell him," Arty said.

Pete found the door locked, and turned in disgust to go back downstairs. As he did so, the doorbell rang, and the young guy opened it to Harry Bond, Riverside's assistant chief of police.

Pete stood still and listened.

"Mind if I use your phone?" Harry said.

"Afraid it's out of order," the young guy said. "Man fixing it now. Trouble?"

"Yeah. A killing up the road.

We didn't want to touch anything there till the sheriff's homicide boys look it over, so we stopped here to make a report."

"Killing?"

"Yeah, up to the MacPhail place. Caught the guy red-handed. Robbery and murder."

"That's funny," the young guy said. "I didn't know people around here went in for that sort of thing."

"Don't, as a rule," Harry said. "But this guy's from the City. Says his name's Canelli. I wouldn't be telling you this but it's such an open and shut case. The guy said he just dropped in to visit. Ha! Well, guess we'll go on into town. Thanks anyway."

"Hey, this door's locked," Pete called down.

Harry looked up at the sound of the voice.

"Hi, Pete."

"Hello, Harry." Pete spoke to the young guy: "You got the key?"

"No," Arty said. "I don't know where it would be."

"Maybe I can help," Harry offered. "I got a little gimmick here. Have to have these things in our business, you know."

"Go ahead," Arty said.

Harry came upstairs. Pete showed him the lock, and Harry worked on it with a strip of celluloid till the door clicked.

"There y' are, Pete."

"Thanks, Harry. How's the wife?"

Harry turned at the top of the stairs. "Just tol'able, Pete. It's that female trouble she's had for a long

time. It bothers her."

"Why don't you take her to Doc Logan?" Pete suggested. "My wife had the same thing, and he fixed her up."

"Yeah?" Harry said. "Maybe I will, at that. Be seein' ya, Pete."

"So long, Harry."

Pete turned back to the burgled door and opened it. He gaped. A sort of paralysis seemed to hold him for a few seconds, and Harry was at the front door before Pete's vocal cords would function.

"You better come here a minute, Harry," he called quietly.

Harry looked up at him. "What's the matter?"

"Come and see," Pete said.

Harry looked annoyed as he came up the stairs, Arty shrugged his shoulders and went into the living room. He wondered where Sam was.

Presently the cop came down and stood in the doorway. "Say, fella, how long you been here?"

"About two hours," Arty said carefully. "Why?"

The cop took out his gun. It was very steady in his hand as it pointed at Arty's left eye. "This is why. Put 'em up!"

Arty raised his hands slowly. "Say, what is this?"

"Never you mind. Just set still." The cop spoke over his shoulder. "Pete, ask Maurice to come in."

They held the tableau until a younger policeman came in. "Frisk him," Harry ordered.

"Listen, I haven't done anything," Arty protested. "I been right here

since the three-thirty train came in."

Maurice found the money, counted it, and whistled. "Come along, you," he said.

Rita couldn't keep the tears back as she listened to the news broadcast. She knew she was a fool, but even fools, she reflected, could fall in love.

"Bridgeport, Connecticut," the announcer said. "Arthur Kramer and George Canelli were executed here today within ten minutes of each other. This brought to a fitting conclusion one of the strangest series of coincidences in the criminal history of the state. Both men committed the same crime, murder and robbery, within a few miles of each other, and almost at the same time. Both victims were operators on the New York black market. Kramer was convicted of the murder of Little

Sam Gross, boss of a gang of black marketeers. Canelli killed Edward MacPhail, one of Gross' lieutenants. Both men were caught on the scene of the crime, arrested by the same officers, and taken together in the same police car to the same jail. Both protested innocence, yet pleaded guilty when confronted with overwhelming evidence.

"A curious factor in the case was that, though both men denied knowing each other, they tried repeatedly to attack each other in the prison yard, and guards were forced to keep them out of sight of each other at all times. Police have believed that there was some sinister connection between the two crimes, but have not been able to verify that belief. And so came to an end, a deserved end, the lives of two more killers. Crime does not pay."

Rita wiped away her tears, and stared silently at the radio.

